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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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50X1-HUM

COUNTRY USSR (Komi ASSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT Railroads and Installations in the Vorkuta - Pechora Area

DATE DISTR. 25 April 1961

NO. PAGES 1

REFERENCES RD

50X1-HUM

DATE OF INFO.

PLACE & DATE ACQ

50X1-HUM

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

storage installations, airfields, railroads, and construction activities in the Vorkuta - Pechora area

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STATE	X	ARMY	#	X	NAVY	X	AIR	15	FBI	SEC OCR	X	NSA	X	NIC

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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

RAILROADS AND INSTALLATIONS IN
THE VORKUTA - PECHORA AREA

Railroads and Installations in the Vorkuta - Pechora Area

1. the Pechora area as a flat, eroded, swampy terrain surrounding the Pechora River, with heavy forests in the southernmost sections. The city of Pechora (20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants-sic) was located in an area approximately two by three kilometers, about five kilometers north of the confluence of the Kozhva and Pechora Rivers. Logging, mining (iron and nickel), and the exploitation of rich tundra earth which was transported to other areas to enrich poor soil, were the chief industries. The local source of electricity was unknown. For the most part, the town was made up of permanent structures built from rubblework and steel, and frame barracks. There were rolled pebble and dirt streets, with log sidewalks. Public fountains supplied well water; there was no sewer system but septic tanks were in use.

Storage and Military Installations

2. a highway ran parallel to the south side of a railroad line leading northeastward from the junction of the Kozhva and Pechora Rivers. about six large rubblework storehouses approximately 15 meters high, and several other buildings located on the opposite bank near Krasnoborskaya in a guarded area surrounded by barbed wire fence. (See point 4, overlay of Pechora River area, page 7). There were guard towers along the perimeter fence of this installation, and at night the depot was lighted by floodlights. the guards appeared to be military personnel. Occasionally soldiers were seen along th roads or in the town of Pechora; their service arm was unidentifiable. MVD and infantry troops were stationed in this region with the primary function of guarding the concentration camps;

3. a military and commercial airfield located northwest of the Kozhva-Pechora River junction. (See point 1, overlay, page 7 .) this airfield two kilometers north of the railroad bridge which crossed the confluence of the two rivers. This was a seven-span, heavy metal bridge which was supported on six or seven concrete piers and which accommodated a single track section of the Moscow-Vorkuta railroad line. It was rumored that this bridge was to be adapted for a double track rail line.

4. highway con- struction project which involved the preparation of a roadbed made up of tamped earth, river stones and cement after the quantities of humus or swampy land had been removed. The highway's surface was not topped with a layer of concrete or asphalt, but consisted of rolled stone imbedded in the earth and cement. The highway was

from 30 to 50 centimeters higher than the surrounding ground level, and alternately, at every 100 meters on either side, stake markers were placed so that the highway could be located when covered with snow. Allegedly a highway bridge was to span the Pechora River at the southern portion of the road, and eventually the northern branch was to service the iron and nickel mines in the Urals. (Refer to point 3, overlay of Pechora area, page 7 , for illustration of extent of the highway's completion.) 50X1-HUM

(however roads in this area were built of 50X1-HUM tree trunks, which was a quicker, more economical, more durable construction method than any other. such 50X1-HUM highways in and south of Ukhta. The remainder of the roads were made of clay or a combination of sand and clay, and were practically impassable because of the winter snows and summer rains.

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5. four to six kilometers west of the seven-span railroad bridge a railroad line branched northward from the Moscow-Vorkuta line and ran to Sokolova via the town of Ust-kozhva. This railroad line also serviced the airfield described above. In the 50X1-HUM opposite direction a branch line led south to the storage area described above, and went on to the town of Krasnoborskaya.

Inta Airfield

6. 50X1-HUM

An airfield located one and one-half kilometers south of Inta was then under construction. The swampy landing area was being filled with stones imported on flat-cars, and earth, and an area one-half kilometer deep had been completed. Construction of landing strips, signal systems, buildings or hangars had not yet been started. There was no highway leading to the airfield, however there were intermittent stretches of a clay and sand-surfaced road about 20 meters from the railroad line; the airfield's edge was also located about this distance from the railroad line. (Refer to points 3 - Inta airfield, 2 - Inta, and 1 - Moscow - Vorkuta railroad line, overlay of Vorkuta area, attached.)

Moscow - Vorkuta Railroad Line

7. the railroad 50X1-HUM stretch between Inta and Abez (point 6, attachment) was standard -gauge Soviet track, as was a spur line which ran northwest from the Inta station to the coal fields in that zone (point 4, attachment). In 1949 one train of 20 loaded 60-ton coal cars arrived daily via this spur and continued south on the main line. It was rumored that this section of the main line was to be made double-track, however no evidence of such activity. 50X1-HUM The line was rumored to have existed since 1932.

8. Only the section of the rail line from Leningrad station to Moscow was electrified. From Inta to Vorkuta there were many grades, and freight trains traveling in either direction had two locomotives.

The track rails were of different lengths: 10, 12, and 50X1-HUM 20 meters, of unknown weights per meter. The tar-covered pine railroad ties had to be replaced frequently because they rotted rapidly from the dampness of the swampy terrain. The railroad bed consisted of a 30-centimeter layer of stone. The maximum freight

train make-up was about 50 60-metric-ton cars drawn by two locomotives. In 1949 two instances of coupling device breakage, causes unknown. Passenger trains consisted of less than 20 cars. The maximum velocity of both types of traffic was 40 kilometers per hour. 50X1-HUM

9. A guard was stationed every four kilometers to check the track and alert locomotive engineers of danger by placing an explosive warning device 800 meters from either side of the danger point. In 1949 telephones were used for communications between stations 50X1-HUM
Signal lights were located near the stations along this stretch of railroad.

10. Three kilometers north of Inta there was a seven-meter long, steel reinforced, log constructed, railroad bridge over the Bolshaya Inta. It was rumored that this bridge was to be replaced, but in 1953 it was still in use. About three kilometers north of the town of Abez there was a 200-meter long metal railroad bridge which rested on three or four concrete piers. This bridge spanned the Usa River; its load capacity was unknown.

Vorkuta and Surrounding Area

11. very rich coal fields located in the Vorkuta area. (Refer to overlay attached, point II.) Large scale mining operations were underway in 1952 - 1953. four to six coal trains made up of about 40 loaded 60-ton cars pass daily, Vorkuta mine field traffic was equally heavy during the night. Further north on the tributaries of the Vorkuta River gold-mining operations were conducted by prison labor. there were plans to extend the railroad line from Vorkuta to Oktyabrskiy in order to better serve the mining area. (See point III, overlay.) In the winter, this work force was relocated to another site, and the guards who remained were supplied by horse drawn sleighs, dog sled teams, and recently, by light tractors with very wide, heavy treaded wheels (sic). These tractors were also used to bring supplies to the different convict work gangs which were assigned to railroad construction road building, and lumbering sites. 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM

Vorkuta - Labytnangi Railroad Line

12. railroad tunnel through the Ural mountains (see overlay, attachment) which would serve the railroad line connecting Vorkuta and the mouth of the Ob River. The size of the tunnel was large enough to accommodate a double track line; in fact it was rumored that the entire length of the railroad line was to be double track. Trains transported laborers and materiel to the mouth of the tunnel; the laborers either worked on tunnel construction, or in coal mines or local logging operations. (there were no tunnels along this route, nor were there any plans for making this a double track section because of the mountainous nature of the terrain.) 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM

13. the railroad route of the section of track leading to Vorkuta was not accurately depicted on W.A.C. No. 94 attached overlay the actual location of the railroad line. (See overlay, route indicated by cross marks.) 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM 50X1-HUM

14. 50X1-HUM there were a few gentle grades along this railroad route and trains traveling in either direction were powered by only one locomotive. The single track, standard Soviet gauge railroad line was constructed and guarded similarly to that line previously described in paragraphs 8 and 9. About 30 kilometers east of Polyarnyy Ural there was a strongly constructed metal bridge (point 14, overlay) about 100 meters in length which spanned an unidentified tributary of the Sob River. The bridge's load capacity was unknown. On this line, each freight train had a maximum number of 15 60-metric ton freight cars and passenger trains never had more than six cars. Their greatest speed was 20 kilometers per hour. Due to great changes in temperature in this area, the track rails frequently broke, both in summer and winter. 50X1-HUM It was rumored that this stretch was completed in 1948; in 1951 it had not been improved. 50X1-HUM

15. 50X1-HUM a meteorological service post east of Polyarnyy Ural (point 11, overlay). Information received from the gang foreman on temperatures, air pressure, condition of the ten-kilometer local stretch of track and the amount of repair work completed on same was telephoned daily to another meteorological post located at the Polyarnyy Ural railroad station. 50X1-HUM

16. In 1951 there was no bridge over the Ob River between Labytnangi and Salekhard. Passengers detrained at Labytnangi and crossed the river by barge to Salekhard where they again boarded a train and continued on their journey. In winter rail tracks were laid on a 50-meter-wide, water-sprayed strip across the frozen river; before the summer thaw, the railroad tracks were removed. 50X1-HUM no bridge had been constructed across the river because of the river's width (one kilometer) and the strong current.

Salekhard - Igarka Railroad Line

17. 50X1-HUM construction of a 500-kilometer stretch of the Salekhard - Igarka railroad line 50X1-HUM which extended almost to the town of Nadym. (See point 19, overlay.) this single, standard Soviet gauge line extended for 1,200 kilometers to Igarka and a second track was to be 50X1-HUM added later. No stations nor branch lines existed along the stretch at this time 50X1-HUM There were no steep grades. The rail lengths, 50X1-HUM ties, and railroad bed were the same as those described above.

The inclement weather conditions affected the 50X1-HUM regularity of train traffic. In spring and summer the road bed softened with the thaws, and in winter, great drifts of snow covered the tracks. Freight trains were composed of less than 20 small 50X1-HUM freight cars. In 1953 the line had been completed and Salekhard and Igarka were connected by rail. the construction plans were numbered 501 and 503. in 1956 this line was operative

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Overlay of Vorkuta - Pechora Area (W.A.C. 94, Ob River Mouth)

18. The following legend identifies numerical designations on attached overlay of World Aeronautical Chart No. 94, 3rd Edition, scale 1: 1,000,000:

1. Vorkuta - Vologda - Moscow railroad line
2. Town of Inta
3. Airport under construction (Inta Airport)
4. Spur line
5. Bolshaya Inta (stream)
6. Town of Abez
7. Usa River bridge
8. Vorkuta
   I. Actual route of railroad
   II. Coal Fields
   III. Vorkuta River basin, gold-producing sands
9. Railroad line to Labytnangi
10. Meteorological service post
11. Polyarnyy Ural
12. Sob River
13. Meteorological service post
14. Sob River bridge
15. Labytnangi
16. Ob River crossing
17. Salekhard
18. Salekhard - Igarka railroad line
19. Village of Nadym

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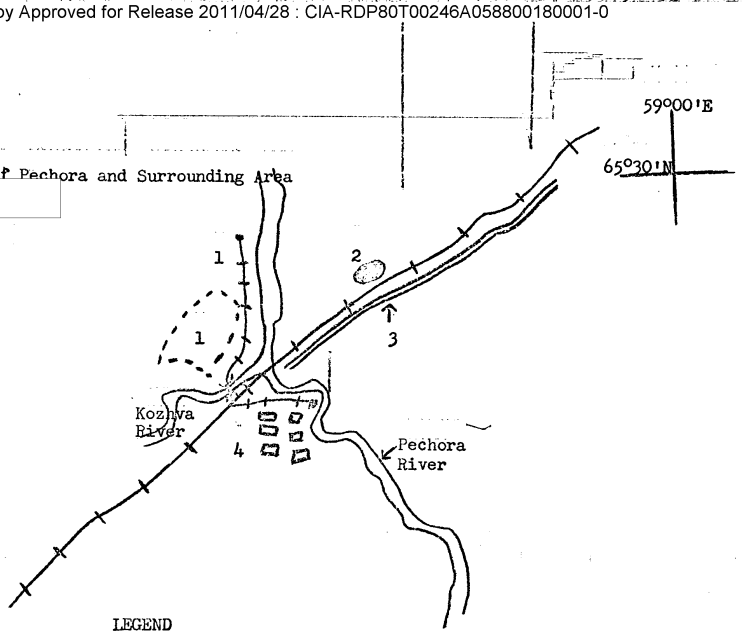
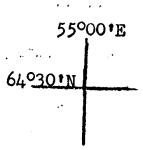
Overlay of the city of Pechora and Surrounding Area





LEGEND

1. Approximate location of airfield and railroad line to Sokolova
2. City of Pechora
3. Highway under construction
4. Location of large storehouses and railroad junction for Krasnoborskaya